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THE WANDERING GUERRILLA: —OR, THE— INFANT BRIDE OF TRUXILLO. A Mexican Romance of Troublous Times.

BY SYLVANUS COBB, JR.

[CONTINUED.]

CHAPTER VI.

THE AMBUSH.



EARLY on the morning following the events last recorded, Boquilla emerged from a small hut among the mountains, dressed as though for a perilous journey. The hut was situated in a sort of vale between two peaks, and surrounded by a thick growth of stunted pines. It was a wild, desolate spot, and the wind tuned most mournfully among the dark boughs. Few people could have lived there in comfort, and even Boquilla himself did not seem to be entirely contented in his drear abode, but he was for the present forced to it, or he would not have been there. One could tell from his face that he sought not the mountain ravine from choice, for there was nothing of misanthropy in his look; but, on the contrary, his frank, open features betokened strong social affections, and a noble, generous soul. Still that drear cot was his home, and there he lived, most of the time alone. Sometimes, to be sure, he had visitors,—perhaps they were only guerrillas,—but people said they were bandits. Let that be as it may, however, Boquilla never joined them in their excursions, and they never asked him, though they stood ready at any moment to render him all the assistance he asked or needed. He held a strange power over them, and at times they seemed almost to worship him. Few, save the guerrillas and mountain brigands, knew him even by sight, for he seldom left his mountain retreat.

After Boquilla came from his cot, he stood awhile and gazed about him, and then he moved on through a narrow path that led around a side of the mountain peaks. At length he reached a spot from whence the country below him could be seen, and far away in the distance he could see the dwelling of Don Miguel Truxillo. Here he remained for some minutes, and then he started to descend the mountain. He was armed with a short, heavy sword and a brace of pistols, and his dress was mostly of leather. About half way down the mountain he came to a small bit of table land, upon which the short, thick grass grew plentifully, and here there were two horses feeding. One of them he caught, and having led him to a tree, upon the lower branches of which hung a saddle and bridle, he threw the trappings upon the animal's back, and then mounted. The way was now more easy of travel, and part of the distance the horse could move on at an easy trot.

At length the guerrilla reached the foot of the mountain, and came upon a spot where the massive oak grew large and thick, casting an almost impenetrable shade upon all around. Here he stopped, and placed a small horn to his lips. He sounded a loud, shrill blast, and ere long it was answered by the appearance of half a dozen horsemen, who came from different parts of the surrounding thicket. A mounted Boquilla gazed around upon the new-comers, as though he had not expected so many; but seeming satisfied that they were all friends, he turned to the one who seemed to be the leader:

"Tepec," he said, "have you sent out a courier yet?"

"Yes, señor,—three hours ago. He started before the first peep of dawn."

"But he has not returned?"

"No, señor; though I should think he would be back soon."

"Of course he will not miss the game?"

"No,—there is no danger of that. It was Bernardo whom I sent, and he is not a man to be misled, or to fall into neglect. You may be sure he will bring intelligence when he comes."

This Tepec was a stout, dark-skinned, heavily bearded man, somewhere in the middle age

of life; and he was, in fact, the chief of a numerous band of brigands, numbering in all over one hundred, most, if not all, of whom had been patrio guerrillas, but who had taken to the mountains since the tyrannical rule of Iturbide had been established. The government had offered large rewards for Tepec's apprehension, but none of the peasants, or hunters, or poor miners would expose him, for he was in truth the poor man's friend.

Boquilla had conversed with the chief some five or ten minutes, when the quick tramp of a horse was heard, and in a few moments more, an armed man rode into the place.

"How now, Bernardo?" cried Boquilla, approaching the man as he rode up. "Have you been out on my mission?"

"Yes, señor," deferentially replied the brigand. "I have been, and I have found all you wish to know."

"Ah!—and they have started?"

"Yes, señor,—six of them."

"Six?" repeated Boquilla.

He seemed to reflect for a moment, and then he turned towards the leader.

"Tepec," he continued, "are you at liberty for a few hours?"

"Yes,—all day."

"Then suppose you take the men you have with you, and follow me."

"With pleasure."

"You had better make as much haste as possible," said Bernardo, "for they were swift upon the road."

"We will set off at once," returned Boquilla. "Are you ready, Tepec?"

"Ay,—always ready."

"Then forward!"

As Boquilla thus spoke, he put spurs to his horse, and started out from the wood. It was a somewhat narrow path into which he struck, leading around the base of the mountain, and as soon as he was in plain travelling the whole party set into a smart gallop. At the end of an hour they came to a point where a wide road crossed the way, and here the guerrilla made a sign for the rest to halt. He then rode forward into the road, and having examined the way, he came back.

"No one has passed yet," he said.

"But they'll be along pretty soon," added Bernardo, looking up at the place of the sun.

"I suppose so," replied Boquilla; "and," he added, looking towards Tepec, "we must be ready for them when they come. I don't want to kill any of them if I can help it, though we may possibly be forced to do it. They must be captured for the while, at all events, for I am determined to see the inside of the despatches they guard. There is no need that I should attend you how to operate, for you are all old soldiers, and you know how to behave."

As Boquilla ceased speaking, he drew an immense black beard from beneath his vest and fitted it to his face. It altered his appearance wonderfully—so much so that even his own followers would not have known him if they had not been direct witnesses of the sudden transformation.

"Hark!" uttered Bernardo, shortly after the guerrilla had put on his beard. "There they come. I can hear the tramp of horses."

"Then stand close behind this copse," said Boquilla, "and watch for my word. Be quick, now, every man of you, for success depends upon momentary management than upon strength."

—Ah! Here they come!

Up the road came a party of six horsemen, and at their head rode Don Juan Calleja, and with their rear rode Don Juan Calleja. They were chatting glibly, and the coarse laugh that accompanied their words told pretty plainly the nature of their confab. Calleja was telling his nearest companion the result of his visit to the house of Truxillo, but ere he could finish the tale, he was startled by a sharp, quick cry from one of his followers, and on turning his head he saw a body of armed men just emerging from the cross-path.

"Forward!" cried Boquilla, drawing his sword in one hand and a pistol in the other, holding the rein in the pistol hand. "Secure them at

once, and shoot down the first man who attempts your lives!"

As he spoke he dashed out into the road, and confronted the dark colonel.

"Who are you, and what do you want?" cried Don Juan, whipping his sword from its scabbard.

"All that you have!" was Boquilla's response, as he fetched a blow upon the colonel's upturned weapon that sent it whizzing upon the ground.

He had watched the movement of Don Juan's sword, and he struck it down the instant it came from the scabbard, and before it could be laid upon its guard.

"It is but little money you will get from me!" hissed Don Juan, at the same time drawing a pistol.

"If you are determined to resist, then take that!" uttered Boquilla, between his clenched teeth, at the same time dealing Don Juan a blow upon the right arm with the flat of his thick heavy sword that benumbed it in an instant.

"Now make but another sign towards resistance, and I'll put a ball through your head as sure as death!"

"By San Dominic, I know that voice!" exclaimed Don Juan, starting back aghast.

"Never mind the voice now, but attend to my orders. I want to see every article of luggage you carry."

By this time the colonel's five followers were silenced, and each one stood trembling upon the ground with the muzzle of a cocked pistol at his ear. Don Juan saw how he was situated, and with as good grace as possible he submitted and laid down his saddle. As soon as his weapons were delivered up, he was ordered to reveal his luggage. First he produced a purse of gold, and this Boquilla threw upon the ground, remarking as he did so:

"I want none of your money, though some of my good friends here may like it." Bernardo stepped forward and picked up the purse, and to see all.

Boquilla continued: "Come, go on, I want to see all."

The colonel uttered an oath, and after some fumbling he drew forth a watch. The guerrilla took it and dashed it against a rock.

"You know I want not such baubles as that."

"Then what do you want?"

"You are bound to Guadalajara?"

"Yes," returned the colonel, evincing some surprise.

"And you are sent thither by Iturbide?"

"How do you know?"

"I guess at it."

"Then guess again, and I have guessed that you have papers from the *soi-disant* emperor."

"I want them."

"Then you'll have to hunt, I think; and if you find any such you'll be more fortunate than I should be in the same search."

"Perhaps you speak the truth," said Boquilla, "but you shall be overhauled at all events."

Tepec and Bernardo were both at liberty, and with their assistance the colonel was soon stripped to the skin; but no papers such as the guerrilla sought for were to be found. The saddle was then taken from Don Juan's horse, and the different parts examined, but without effect.

"Look ye here," said Bernardo, as a sudden idea seemed to come to his mind, "I remember once how Hidalgo arranged to confine despatches for his couriers. Don Juan was with him then, and he may have remembered it. Let me look at that bridle."

The colonel made a spring towards the head of his horse, but he did not succeed in breaking away from his captors, and on the next moment Bernardo had taken off the bridle, and drawn a knife from his pocket. With this he commenced to rip up the stitching which confined the two pieces that formed the side straps of the head-stall, and when this was done a neatly folded paper was brought to light. The opposite strap was opened with the same result, and after Boquilla had run his eyes over the two papers, he said, while his brow showed a triumphant emotion:

"I have found all I want, and you may now continue your way to Guadalajara as soon as you please, and when you return to the capital you may tell Iturbide that he has friends among the mountains who are watching him with more than ordinary interest. If they please him to know that he is so narrowly looked after."

"By San Jago! you had better beware lest you are looked after!" growled Don Juan, as he began to put on his clothes again.

"O, I am used to being looked after," returned the guerrilla, with a light laugh. "I have been hunted by tyrants for years, and yet you see here I am, as free as the air of my native mountains. Go on, now, and give your orders to the governor at Guadalajara, and then hurry back and tell your master whom you met among the mountains, and how they treated you. Tell him you met the guerrilla chief, Boquilla!"

"Boquilla!" repeated the colonel, looking up with a doubtful expression.

"Ay—do you not like the name?"

"I should if 'twere your own."

"It is my own, and you can tell your master that he can see me at any time he will come."

Don Juan gazed a while into the guerrilla's great dark eyes, for they were about all he could see above the thick black beard, and then with a dubious shake of the head, and a bitter curse, he proceeded with his dressing. In time his toilet was performed, and then he was allowed to go and pick up his sword. All the pistols of Don Juan's party were discharged, and then returned to their respective owners. The ripped bridle was still fit for service, and having been placed upon the horse's head once more, the colonel remounted, and without another word, save a muttered threat of vengeance, he rode off at a brisk trot, and his party followed him.

Boquilla watched them until they were out of sight, and then turning his horse's head he rode slowly back towards the mountain.

CHAPTER VII.

THE MISSIONER.

IT was on the third day after the departure of Don Juan Calleja, and the shades of evening were gathering around the dwelling of Truxillo, when an aged priest, all toil-worn, weary, and dust-covered, walked slowly up the broad carriage path that ran among the great China trees. His form was bent, and the long, sparse locks that floated down from his temples, were white as snow. He leaned heavily upon the stout staff which he carried, and when he reached the piazza he sank down upon the lower step. Don Miguel had seen him, and he hastened out.

"Holy father," the old man uttered, gazing with reverence upon the weary form, "will you not walk into my dwelling?"

"Ah, a blessing upon thee, my son," returned the priest, in a low, tremulous, weak voice. "God forbid that I should intrude myself upon your hospitality unasked, but I am foot-sore and weary. Give me but a crust of bread, and a bed of straw in your manger, and I will bless you."

"No, no," quickly cried Truxillo; "such as you fare not so beneath my roof. What! give a holy father of the church but a crust, and place him with my beasts in the manger, when my larders are full, and my soft beds plenty and unused? No,—let me help thee to arise."

"As you will, my son. I will not refuse your kindness, even though I fare better than did the Son of God. He had not where to lay his head. But I am more blessed in worldly matters, and God grant that my blessings do not detract from my faith. Lift me easily, my son, for my limbs are weak and pain-stricken."

Don Miguel helped the stricken man to arise, and then he led him into his dwelling; and when he was placed upon a soft couch, Don Miguel rang for a servant, and soon afterward wine and bread were brought. The priest seized the wine eagerly, and after drinking two full glasses, he seemed to gradually revive, though he yet trembled exceedingly.

"I think you are the Don Miguel Truxillo," he said, after he had broken his bread, and prayed that God and the Saviour would bless and sanctify it.

"I am," replied the don, gazing with renewed reverence upon the old priest.

"Then you have not been falsely spoken of, for I have often heard your name, and you are called a noble, generous man. I am but a poor missioner, and most of my days I have spent in bringing the poor wild tribes of the Indios Bravos to a knowledge of the truth. I have seen much of suffering, and much of joy—for while my poor body has been racked with pain, I have seen my labors blessed and God glorified. But my work is nearly done on earth. I can see the dim verge of this earthly life, and I can hear the still angelic voices that float to me from Eternity."

The missioner stopped and bowed his head, and after murmuring something that sounded like a prayer, he again looked up.

"For many weary days I have been upon the road," he continued; "and to-night, when I reached your gates, I was faint even to exhaustion. If you will give me but a few days of rest beneath your roof, I shall then have strength to go on my way. I would reach the humble cot where I was born, and where I hope to have a sister still living; and once there I will lay me down and patiently await the coming of the angel of death."

"Make this place your home as long as you please," said Don Miguel, much moved by the wayfarer's tone and manner. "I have enough and to spare."

The priest returned his thanks, and after some further conversation, he asked that he might be permitted to lie down and sleep. To this end, he was conducted to a well-furnished chamber,

and there Don Miguel left him. On the following morning, the kind-hearted old man knocked at the missioner's door, and was hidden to enter. The old devotee was up and dressing, and having blessed his friend, he remarked that he would be left alone for his morning's devotions, and that then he would join the family at breakfast. He said he felt much better than on the previous evening, and that he hoped a few days of rest would enable him to renew his journey.

Half an hour afterwards, Don Miguel and his grand-daughter sat down to their morning's meal, and they insisted that the priest should join them; but it was with apparent reluctance that he consented. He craved the blessing of Heaven before he commenced to eat, and then he turned with a smile to Isabel.

"My fair child," he said, "your presence is like a gleam of sunshine here."

Isabel did not blush, for she was strangely attracted by the old man's countenance. He seemed to notice her manner, for he gazed fixedly upon her, and after a while, asked:

"Do you think you recognize a familiar face?"

"I do not know," returned the maiden, slightly startled; but quickly recovering herself, she added: "I thought your features at first appeared somewhat familiar; but I may be mistaken."

"No—I think you are right," said the priest, with a smile; "though your memory and observation must be very quick and keen. I knew your father, and I have held you in my arms and blessed you. Now let us see if you can remember when you saw me last."

"I do not think I can," replied Isabel, gazing farily, yet earnestly, upon the missioner's face.

"Can you not call the circumstance to mind," he resumed, breaking a fresh roll, and then passing his cup for more coffee.

"No, father, I surely cannot."

"But the circumstance was one of more than usual moment."

The maiden bowed her head, but did not speak, and in a few moments more the priest continued:

"It was in the old cathedral at Guanaxuato. Your father was there, and the bishop was there; and there were others there, too. Can you not remember it now?"

Isabel trembled and turned pale, for she knew now what the old man meant, though she had no recollection of his features in connection with it. Don Miguel gazed up into the speaker's face with an inquiring look.

"I do not think I am mistaken," the priest said, as he noticed the look of his host. "Is not this the lady Isabel Truxillo?"

"It is," answered Don Miguel.

"So I thought," resumed the other; and then in a thoughtful mood, he added: "It must be some twelve years now since that eventful evening. I remember it well, for then it was that I first saw Hidalgo."

"And you remember the ceremony that took place on that occasion?" said Don Miguel.

"Yes—for I assisted. The lady Isabel was affianced to Don Juan Calleja. She was more than affianced—she was properly married, though the power of divorce was left in Don Juan's hands."

"Ah, then you know all about it," uttered the don, "and can tell us the particulars."

"Yes—I remember them well."

"I have never seen the record," Truxillo added, "though my son explained the matter to me. Then the power of divorce was left in the hands of Calleja?"

"Yes. I think fifteen was the age set. At the age of fifteen the bride was to be claimed if he saw fit, or at that time he could annul the contract."

"But that time has long since passed, and he did not claim me," exclaimed Isabel.

"And has he not claimed you yet?" asked the missioner, in apparent surprise.

"Yes—he came and claimed me four days ago."

"Ah, then his claim is the same. His claim is not impaired by the delay, but he could not now divorce you without your consent. The limit of his power to annul was placed at a certain time, so that you might lose an opportunity for a favorable moment in case he chose not to keep the contract. You were really his wife twelve years ago, and are the same now."

"Not his lawful, wedded wife," uttered Isabel, trembling violently.

"Yes, most assuredly,—though there was a time set apart as a sort of probation. Yes, yes, you are really his wife, and I congratulate you upon your good fortune if he consents to receive you, for I hear that he is high in power and influence."

"I knew not that I was his wife," the poor girl murmured. "That I was so bound to him that he was really my husband."

"Yet it is most surely so," the priest returned. He poured out a quantity of brandy into his coffee as he spoke, and having drank it, he turned towards Don Miguel, and commenced conversation upon another subject. Isabel regarded him narrowly as his face was now turned from her, and as she saw his profile, she was impressed with the conviction that she had seen him since the time to which she alluded. It may have been from a sudden repugnance which she felt, but she could not avoid the suspicion that he was not wholly trustworthy, and the longer she gazed upon the boldly-marked profile, the deeper became her dubious doubts.

As early as politeness would permit, the maid arose from the table, and sought her own room, and there she pondered long and deeply upon what the old priest had told her; but she could not make his words appear false, but, on the contrary, they seemed truthful, and though she had not so viewed the matter before, yet now she felt that she was truly the dark man's wife. In the eye of human law she was so—but not so before God—before the sacred laws of Heaven. She looked into her own soul, where she knew the true tallman of the wife lay, and she saw there that she was not the wife of any living man. Then she sank upon her knees, and prayed to God to direct her aright, and after she had prayed she again pondered upon the subject of her connection with Don Juan Calleja. Her's was a soul not bound by fear, nor made to be ruthlessly trampled upon while she had the power of resistance, and after she had thought calmly upon the matter, she knew that she was no wife of Don Juan. With her own lips she had never spoken the word of promise, and though she might be forced to wed with him, yet she knew that no sin would lay upon her soul if she should escape from his power.

This was a great source of comfort to the fair girl. Had she believed that Heaven would hold her as the wife of Calleja, she would not have moved a muscle to escape from him, but would have suffered on in silence; but now that she had fully satisfied her own conscience that no such union lay upon her, she hoped that her escape might be accomplished, and for this she looked towards Francisco Moreno. To escape from her grandfather's estate without strong assistance would be impossible, and if she remained there without other assistance than her grandfather, wedding with the fearful man would be inevitable. So Isabel Truxillo looked upon Francisco, and the prayer of her soul was in his behalf. She remembered the promise he had made, and though there was much room for dark and terrible doubt, yet she did not lose all hope. She knew that the young man was noble and heroic, and then she placed much weight upon the assistance of Boquilla. She knew him not, to be sure, save by casual sight, but in her mind he was clothed with sort of mystic power, and she grasped the hope thus held out with more than passing ardor.

CHAPTER VIII.

SUSPICIONS AND SUSPICIONS.

SHORTLY after breakfast Don Miguel ordered his coach, and in company with Isabel he set out for a morning's ride, intending only to be gone an hour or two. He left the old missionero in his study, where the man had expressed a desire to remain and look at some of the books. The host had not the least hesitation in leaving him there, for he had the strongest confidence in his sacred character, and he even went so far as to order the servants not to disturb him.

For some time after Truxillo had gone the old priest sat there in the study, and pored over an old manuscript volume, to which his host had particularly called his attention; but his mind did not seem to be upon the book, for ever and anon his eyes would wander furtively about the room, and then he would listen, as though to ascertain if any one were near. At length he closed the book and allowed it to rest upon his knee for a moment. His next movement was to place the volume upon the table, and then he arose to his feet. At one end of the apartment stood a large mahogany cabinet, containing numerous lockers and drawers, and towards this the priest went. Again he gazed about him, and being assured that no one was near, he commenced to overhaul every paper that came in his way. He found keys, and with these he opened many of the places which were locked.

"I am gaining much knowledge," he muttered, as he pursued his rather dubious occupation. "By Saint Dominic, the old fellow little thinks when he has left in his library. Wonder if he knows how many spies our good emperor is forced to employ. Now did ever mortal see such a mess of trash collected together in one person's hands! All flesh is grass, and all gold is dross—dross is trash. San Jago! how the old fellow has piled the trash up! More than three millions thus far, all set plainly down here in regular inventory. Here are lands and houses, cattle and horses, and the richest mines in the empire. *Diablo!* Don Miguel, you must bleed for the good of your country—your purse must bleed! And now who is the heir? The lady Isabel, of course. Fortunate Don Juan! But upon my soul, you shall not have it all; nor shall Isabel see much of the dross our good lord Truxillo has managed to accumulate."

And thus the missionero mumbled on while he ransacked the place. He had found Don Miguel's private apartment, and private memorandum, and all such things as he deemed of sufficient importance he minutely down upon a small book which he carried with him. In this way he had spent an hour, when, as he opened a small drawer which was arranged within one of the lockers, he found a parchment roll, bearing several seals, and which he seemed to date. He eagerly opened it, and found to be a will.

"Aha!" he uttered, with peculiar satisfaction, as he ran his eye over the instrument, "so the fair senorita is the sole heir. Upon my soul, she'll be a golden wife. Fortunate Don Juan!" This will was carefully rolled up and put back in its place, and then the other things which had

been disturbed were re-arranged, and all made as it had been found. This had hardly been accomplished when the sound of coach-wheels was heard, and having unlocked the door, the missionero resumed his seat by the table, and took up the book again. When, shortly afterwards, Don Miguel entered, he was so deeply engaged in the matter of the volume that he hardly noticed the entrance of his host.

"Still at the book?" said Truxillo. But the priest did not look up. "You read as though you were interested, holy father," said the don, in a louder key. "Ah, my son, did you speak? Have you not ridden yet?" the old man uttered, closing the book, and looking up.

"Hidden!" repeated Don Miguel. "To be sure I have. I started two hours since." "Two hours! Impossible! Why, I have read ever since you left."

"Then you must have been most deeply interested." "Yes, but that is simple history written there," said Don Miguel, who had never discovered anything but plain, common-place, dry narrative in the volume.

"Ah, *amigo*," returned the priest, not in the least discouraged, "I know it is history; but what comes of thought does simple history call up in the mind of him who stands in imagination among those of whom he reads. It is while traveling through the regions of the past that we gain our best thoughts—the future only leads to conjecture. But most anything in the shape of reading would please me now, since I have been so long without it."

"Yes, yes," answered Truxillo, more moved by the solemn manner of the missionero than by his words; "I suppose you have not had much reading among the Indians?" "Very little, I assure you. I have only read in God's great book of Nature; but even that is a book that may well please and instruct the pious student."

Don Miguel of course assented to this idea, and after that the conversation turned upon the nature, condition and habits of the *Indios Bravos*, and the priest proved himself well acquainted with the whole matter. The old don was well pleased with his guest's company, and he spent the greater part of the day with him.

If the old missionero imagined that he was remaining beneath that roof without any suspicion resting upon him, he was much mistaken. The ever-watchful lieutenant, Aldamar, had noticed him, and the same ideas had seized upon his mind that had at first moved Isabel. During the afternoon the lieutenant and maiden met.

"Where is Don Miguel?" was Aldamar's first question.

"He is with that old priest in the library," replied Isabel.

"Have you seen him?"

"Who—the priest?"

"Yes."

"I ate with him this morning."

"And what did you think of him?"

"I did not like his looks at all."

"Did you have any suspicions?"

"Only that I had seen him before. I knew that I had seen his countenance somewhere, and he explained it by saying that he was present in the cathedral of Guayaquil when I was summoned to Don Juan Calleja; but I know I have seen him since then. I have seen those features within two years past, I know."

"So have I," returned Aldamar, with a puzzled look; "and yet I cannot at present make out where I have seen him."

"He is a strange looking man," pursued Isabel, "and has evidently seen much of the world. Perhaps he is some priest who once uplaid Hidalgo, and has since kept himself in concealment."

"It may be so, but I much doubt it," responded the lieutenant. "I do not like the looks of him at all. Don Miguel places altogether too much confidence in him, and I wish you would watch him as narrowly as possible."

"I will do so, Aldamar, for I owe him no favor. He assured me that I am even now Don Juan's legal wife, and that he was present at the ceremony and knows all about it."

"Aha! Does he?" uttered Aldamar, with strongly-marked emphasis. "We will look to him, then. But let me not be so sure that you are right. I do not believe that Calleja will ever gain you for a wife, except by your own consent. He is a villain."

"Ah, my son, know that," said the maiden, with a dubious shake of her head; "and so is the emperor a villain!"

The lieutenant gazed into Isabel's face for a moment, and then he said:

"True, true—Irribide is a villain, and through him Calleja may obtain your hand, for Don Miguel will not dare to say to him nay."

Isabel did not choose to reveal the hope she had in Francisco's promise, nor did she always hold it herself. Sometimes she tried to school herself for the worst, but try as she would, the future would take some coloring of light from her lover's pledge.

"But never mind that now," continued Aldamar, after a few moments' hesitation. "Don Juan Calleja has more enemies than friends. Look you, my son, I am even now Don Juan's legal wife, and that he was present at the ceremony and knows all about it."

Isabel promised to do her best, and after that she returned to the house, and Aldamar went out to the stable.

Don Miguel sat up with the priest until quite late, and most of the time Isabel remained with them. She kept her eyes fixed upon him most narrowly, and she seemed to notice it for he moved restlessly in his seat a number of times when he found her watching him with more interest than usual.

Various topics had been discussed, and if Truxillo had not been predisposed in the priest's favor he might have seen that his stock of learning was not so great as would seem to appear.

It was superficial and empty, and he artfully contrived to draw more from his host than came from him; but he did it in such a way that he seemed to hold it all beforehand in his own knowledge. At length there came a pause in the conversation, and Truxillo seized the opportunity to ask a question which had been for some time upon his mind.

"Holy father," said he, "you have travelled all over the country, and from your remarks I am led to judge that you have been a refugee. Did you ever chance to come across a man who calls himself Boquilla?"

The missionero started at the sound of the name, and it was some moments before he answered.

"Ah, my son," he at length said, with a dubious shake of the head, "I have seen him, and I fear he is not what an honest man should be. Has he ever been here?"

"Yes—several times," returned Don Miguel, with considerable anxiety depicted upon his face. "He has sought shelter here for the night, and I have had a curiosity to know who and what he was, but I could never find out anything from him."

"Do you think he will be here again?" the priest asked.

"I cannot tell. He comes and goes when he pleases."

"I should like to see him, for I fear he is a bad man—a very wicked, degraded mortal."

Isabel gazed more sharply than ever into the priest's face, and she felt confident that he lied; she knew that he was speaking falsely, and her suspicions were confirmed. To be sure, she knew but little of Boquilla, but she had seen him enough to know that he had an honest, noble countenance, and that his eye could never belong to a wicked man. And then the assurance of her lover had much weight in her mind. Now, as she looked into the face of the guest, she was surprised that her grandfather did not notice what a villainous look he had, for she saw it in every feature, and most strange features they were, too.

"Then you know nothing positive concerning Boquilla?" said Don Miguel.

"No—only that he is a noted brigand."

"Ah, I feared such was the case."

"But there are different grades of brigands, even," said Isabel, with much warmth, and at the same time directing a withering look at the priest. "Some are more apparently brigands by the cruelty of their deeds—who are proscribed and dare not appear in public. They are men, too, who make most of the poor and defenceless, and who war against their levies upon the emperor's own troops. I do not believe Boquilla is a bad man, nor is he a mean man. He comes openly, and he speaks boldly, and his face is a passport to esteem."

The priest quailed before the proud maiden's look, and after a few moments of troubled thought, he said, with a faint laugh:

"You speak generously, lady; but it comes from a young and inexperienced heart. After you have seen as much of the world as I have, you will learn not to trust to appearances."

"Very likely," returned Isabel, coloring with emotion. "I know that appearances are often deceitful."

She would have said more, but she was indignant, and she knew that she might overstep the bounds of prudence, so she kept back her rising thoughts, and ere long afterwards she left the apartment. As soon as she was gone, the priest signified his desire to retire for the night, and having shown him to the same chamber he occupied the preceding night, Don Miguel followed the example, and sought his own couch.

CHAPTER IX.

THE TARRANTIA!

DON MIGUEL TRUXILLO heard the clock strike the hour of midnight, and shortly afterwards he sank into an uneasy slumber. The events of the past few days had made more impression upon his mind than he revealed to others. He loved his fair young grandchild with the whole ardor of his soul, and the more he thought of Juan Calleja's claim, the more deep became his convictions that Isabel would be made only miserable thereby. He only wished that he had the power to prevent the match; but he had not. He could not prevent the consummation, even had he been a bold, fearless man—for Don Miguel acknowledged himself that he was a timid man, and he often wished that he had been constituted differently.

How long the old don had slept he could not tell, but he was aroused by a strange sound in his room, and on fairly awaking he found that his light had gone out. He started up to a sitting posture and listened, and he was sure he heard a movement of some kind upon the floor.

He dared not leap out of his bed, but he sat there and listened, and trembled. He had presence of mind enough, however, to watch for the nature and direction of the sound, and it seemed to move towards the door. He dared not even cry out for assistance. Once he spoke and asked if any one was there, but he received no answer.

The sound upon the floor at length ceased, and the old man thought his door was shut to and latched. After this all was still, save the low wailing of the wind. It was very dark—much darker than usual. He was very dark—yet not of his bed. He listened eagerly for the repetition of the sound upon the floor, but he did not hear it, and at length he plucked up the courage to get out of his bed. His first impulse was to ring for some of his servants; but after sober reflection he began to think that he might have been deceived—that it was only his excited imagination which had been playing with him. After some such he found his tinder-box, and having lighted his lamp, he looked carefully about the room, but nothing had been moved or disturbed. He went to the door and opened it, and looked out into the corridor, but there was nothing unusual there. After satisfying himself that nothing out of the way was to be found, he felt confident that he had only imagined the

noise, and setting his lamp upon the table again, he once more got into bed.

It was some time before Don Miguel slept again, and when he did sleep it was only to dream horrible dreams. Once he dreamed that a grim, gigantic skeleton—a horrid mass of human bones—came to his bedside and placed its clammy hand upon his brow. He tried to start up, but he could not. He endeavored with all his might to cry out, but his tongue would not move, nor could he even breathe. The skeleton grinned a most horrid grin, and gradually its appearance changed. Its bleached, eyeless sockets seemed staring out from beneath a dark cowl, and the bones of the body became enveloped in the robes of a priest. The heavy hand was taken from his brow and laid upon his breast, and with one last, mighty effort he groined aloud, and started to a sitting posture. It was again dark in his room, and he could hear that it had begun to rain, for the big drops were pattering against his windows. The wind made considerable noise as it moaned through the thick boughs of the China tree; but the startled man heard another noise within his great room. It was that same crawling, shuffling sound upon the floor. The sweat stood in great cold drops upon his brow and temples, and he trembled at every joint. At that instant there came a vivid flash of lightning, and the whole heavens seemed as one sheet of flame. The apartment was lighted up for the instant only, but it was long enough for Don Miguel to see a dark figure crawling along upon the floor towards the door. A low cry broke from his lips, and on the next instant came the thunder-clash. The whole building trembled—the very earth seemed to quake; and when the roar had passed away, and its reverberations among the distant mountains had ceased, all was still once more. The sound upon the floor was hushed, and the wind and the rain-drops alone broke upon the listener's ear. He listened only a moment, and then he reached forth and contrarily grasped the bell-cord, which hung at the head of his bed. He pulled it long and violently, and ere he had let go of it his lieutenant hastened into the room with a lighted lamp in one hand, and a pistol in the other.

"Don Miguel!—my master!—what has happened?" cried Aldamar, catching a glimpse of the old man's terror-struck features.

"O, Aldamar!"

"But what is it? What has happened to move you so?"

"O, holy Saint Peter protect me!" gasped the terror-stricken man, reaching forth one hand and placing it with difficulty upon his attendant's shoulder. "Aldamar, I have had a most terrible but look you about my room, and see if any of the furniture is missing."

Aldamar started at the order, for it sided with his suspicions. He hastened to obey the order, but he could find nothing.

"There is nothing here," he said, "nor can I find any trace of anything. What is it that you have seen?"

"O, terrible! terrible! I was awakened by some sound in my room at first, and I found my light had gone out. I surely heard a noise upon my floor, but it was soon hushed, and I got up and lighted my lamp. After that I got into bed again, but I did not sleep soon long."

The old man stopped here, and gazed furtively about him, and then he went on. He told of the dream he had had, and of what he had seen by the gleam of the lightning.

"You are sure it was a man whom you saw upon the floor?" said Aldamar.

"Yes—I know it was."

"And his form—could you tell that?"

"No—for he was all crouched and bent, and I could only see that it was a dark form moving towards the door."

"Don Miguel, I was the priest?"

"The priest? Impossible!"

"Who else could it have been?"

Truxillo did not answer this question, but with one long, wild, loud cry he leaped from the bed and grasped the lieutenant by both arms.

"Great God of mercy!" he gasped, while he trembled like a dry leaf in the grasp of the whirlwind.

Aldamar was for that moment struck dumb with astonishment, but he soon managed to gain his speech, and in a quick whisper he asked his master what had startled him so.

"That hand!" gasped Don Miguel. "I felt its cold touch again upon my breast! O! O!"

Aldamar was for the moment inclined to doubt his master's sanity; but there must have been some cause for such a movement, and he removed the old man's hands from his arms, and then held the lamp towards the bed. He moved down the corridor, and was just upon the point of raising the sheet higher, when he uttered a cry of horror, and started back.

"What is it?" whispered Don Miguel.

Aldamar spoke not, but again he moved up to the bedside and held the lamp over. The old man trembled dread, and there, upon the very spot where he had laid, they saw the black, misshapen, horrid form of a large tarrantia!

There it lay, a terrible death-minister, with its shaggy, spider-like body half crushed upon the bed-clothes!

Don Miguel stood aghast! For a moment he stood with clasped hands, and then he sank back upon a chair with a deep groan.

"I am a dead man!" he uttered.

"Did you feel it bite?" quickly asked Aldamar.

But the poor man could not tell. He fancied that he had felt the reptile's deadly fangs in his flesh, but he was not sure.

"But do you feel pain now?" continued the lieutenant.

"Yes. All over my body—everywhere!"

Aldamar was now calm enough for cool reflection, and without more delay or question he proceeded at once to examine the old man's body. Had the tarrantia bitten him, the marks by this time would have been terrible, but none could be found.

"Don Miguel, you are safe!" fervently uttered the lieutenant, after he had concluded his

search. "The monster has not bitten you." The old man gazed up into Aldamar's face a moment, and then he started to his feet.

"Not bitten!" he cried. "Safe! I shall I still live!"

"Yes, for you are not harmed. It is a miracle; but so it is."

Don Miguel was soon convinced of his attendant's correctness, and when he became assured that he was safe, the revelation of his feelings was so great that for a long while he was perfectly powerless; and while he sat in his chair, trying to overcome the tumultuous beating of his heart, Aldamar took the tarrantia upon the point of his dagger, and carried it away. When he returned he found his master more possessed and able to converse—for the first question that he asked showed that his mind was his own.

"Aldamar," he said, still pale and shuddering, "where could that deadly monster have come from? I have lived here more than half a century, and I never before saw one of them so high up on the table lands as this."

"Neither did I," responded Aldamar. "And," he added, in a very low, meaning tone, "that one would never have come without some cause! Without the aid of human hands it could never have reached the place where we found it!"

"Aldamar, what mean you?"

"I'll tell you, my good master. I mean that you are too trusting, too open, too unsuspecting. Your holy old priest has done all this!"

"Impossible!"

"I know it."

"Diable! It cannot be! What! a man so old, so infirm, so pious!"

"He may not be so old as you think him; and as for his infirmities and piety they are easily assumed. You saw a man upon your floor, and who else in this house could it be? Ah, Don Miguel, you have harbored a serpent!"

"Let us go to his room," faintly uttered the old man. "Let us see him and confront him, for by my inmost soul, I begin to fear you may be right!"

Truxillo hurried on his clothes, and then the lieutenant took up the lamp and led the way to the apartment which the missionero had occupied. It was on the same floor with the one they left, and situated at the further end of the corridor. When they reached it Aldamar opened the door, and they both went in; but there was nobody there.

"He has gone!" said the lieutenant.

Don Miguel was now fully aroused, and he started forward and looked upon the bed. He saw where a man had lain, but the place was empty now.

"Aldamar," he said, "start up the household, and let search be made. Upon my soul, I think he has fled!"

The lieutenant stopped to make no reply or remark, but quickly lighting the lamp which the priest had left upon his table, so that the don might have light, he started off, and in ten minutes a score of servants were assembled in the lower hall. In a few words as possible, Aldamar explained to them what had transpired, and then set them upon the search. Lanterns were procured, and the house searched all through. The stables, the sheds, the granaries, the store-houses, and all other outbuildings were thoroughly searched, but the priest was nowhere to be found.

"Don Miguel," said the lieutenant, after he had reported the result thus far, "we must take horses and set off. The villain is not far from here, and he may find him."

"Would you go in this rain?" asked the old man, looking out into the darkness, and at the same time holding out his hand upon which the great rain-drops fell fast.

"Never mind the rain," was Aldamar's reply, for he was anxious to commence, or rather continue, the search at once. "Besides," he added, "it will be daylight in less than an hour. You let us set off at once, for I have some strange suspicions concerning that missionero."

Of course Don Miguel did not object, since his retainers were anxious to set off, and in a few minutes a party of fifteen horsemen were under arms and ready for the search.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

INDIAN THERIOLOGY.

The precise idea which the Western Indians entertain of a future life.

As soon as the Indian threw off the flesh, he would find himself standing on the bank of the river, the current running with great rapidity. Across this river was a slender pole stripped of its bark, and lying close down to the water. The Indian who lived in any known disease. She could not be prevailed upon to eat anything in her father's house, but would take a piece of bread and go to the bank of the river. Her father followed her secretly, and saw a large black snake make its appearance, and would express agony by hissing and contortions resembling the bread. The next day the father shot the snake, as it made its appearance. The child swooned, but on recovering from that state was seized with spasms and convulsions resembling the snake's, and died at the same moment of the death of the snake.

SNAKE FASCINATION.

The St. Louis Herald, of July 12th, tells with apparent faith in its truth, a case where a child became fascinated with a black snake. The child, the Herald states, had for a long time been pining away from any known disease. She could not be prevailed upon to eat anything in her father's house, but would take a piece of bread and go to the bank of the river. Her father followed her secretly, and saw a large black snake make its appearance, and would express agony by hissing and contortions resembling the bread. The next day the father shot the snake, as it made its appearance. The child swooned, but on recovering from that state was seized with spasms and convulsions resembling the snake's, and died at the same moment of the death of the snake.

Though a man may not be a logician, or naturalist, yet it is never the further from it by being either liberal, modest, or charitable.—Aurel.

Those travellers were so much moved by the touching pathos of their guide that they instituted farther inquiries, which left them no room to doubt but this was the burial place of the once fair Angela Barnett.

[Written for The Flag of our Union.]

THE TWO MAIDS.

BY FANNY BELL.

One came with light and laughing air,
And cheek like opening flower;
Bright gems were twinkled amid her hair,
And glittered on her brow.

And pearls and costly jewels deck
Her round white arms and lovely neck.
Like summer's sky, with stars bright light,
The jeweled robe around her;
And dawning as the sun's bright light,
The radiant zone that bound her.

And pride and joy were in her eye,
And mortal bound as she passed by.

Another came—'er her mild face,
A gentle shade was stealing;
Yet there no grief of earth we trace,
By that deep, holy feeling.
Which mourns the heart should ever stray
From the pure fount of truth away.

[Written for The Flag of our Union.]

EFFIE STANWOOD.

BY MRS. SARAH E. DAVES.

On a cold, dreary afternoon in mid winter, Mrs. Stanwood sat near a cheerful fire in an elegantly furnished parlor, with her little daughter Effie playing by her side. The wind howled mournfully without, and the rain and sleet beat upon the window panes, ever and anon startling Effie from her play, who would run to the window and exclaim:

"O mother, how it storms; and the streets are almost deserted. How cold and dreary a day must be for the poor! I hope no little children are without shelter, now."

"It is indeed a sad storm, Effie," replied Mrs. Stanwood, "and I am glad to hear my little girl, who is surrounded with so many comforts, speak so thoughtfully of those whom fortune has favored less highly. Ever, my child, cultivate this spirit, for it will make you humbly grateful to your heavenly Father for all your mercies, and shield your heart from the selfishness that too often accompanies the possession of wealth."

At this moment a servant entered, saying that a sweet looking little girl, thinly clad, and shivering with cold, was standing in the hall, and wished to see the lady of the house.

"Let her come in," said Mrs. Stanwood, whose heart ever beat with generous feeling for the needy. "Poor child, it must be dire necessity that has sent her out this stormy day."

The door opened, and a pale-looking child of some eight summers timidly entered, and advancing towards Mrs. Stanwood, and raising her large blue eyes swimming in tears, to her face, said:

"Kind lady, tell me what I shall do for my poor mama, for she is very sick. We have no wood, and nothing to eat. My brother is staying with her now. He wished to come instead of me, but I would not let him, for he was sick all night, because he got so cold yesterday, while trying to get work. O, what will come of us!"

The little supplicant could proceed no further, but burst into tears. Effie, who had gradually approached the child, now flung her dimpled arms around her neck, and begged her not to cry so hard, and leading her towards the fire, made her sit down on her own crick, and warm her cold fingers.

Mrs. Stanwood, who was in the habit of questioning those who applied to her for relief, forbore to do so at this time, for the innocent, tearful expression of that upturned face was stamped indelibly with truth. Hastily ordering her carriage, she bade Effie run to bid the house-keeper put up a basket of provisions immediately, while she went to prepare to visit the home of the little sufferer.

Effie ran or rather flew on her errand of mercy, for, like her mother, nothing touched her sensitive heart so much, as a tale of distress. She soon returned, and giving her companion a huge slice of cake, seated herself beside her, and began with childish curiosity to ask her where she lived, and what was her name.

"My name is Emma Leighton," said the child; "and I live a long, long way from here, in an old house, and never saw such nice things as these before. Your mama will be afraid to come to our house."

"Don't fear that," said Effie, cheerfully. "Mother often goes to poor places, and sometimes takes me with her, for she says when I see how a great many other little children live, it will make me like my own dear home so much the more."

Here the conversation of the little ones was interrupted by the entrance of Mrs. Stanwood, all muffled in furs for her ride, and throwing a cloak of Effie's upon Emma's shoulders, she led her to the carriage, and soon the pair were on their way to the home of poverty. Arrived there, they ascended a dilapidated staircase, and entered a room in the third story, where upon a miserable bed in one corner lay a very much emaciated but still lovely woman, scarcely thirty years of age. Her features were pinched and sharpened by want and sickness.

By her side stood a boy of about twelve years, whose high forehead bore the impress of a lofty mind, although the lines of premature care gave a sad look to his finely-formed mouth, and somewhat dimmed the lustre of his large, dark hazel eyes. Mrs. Stanwood approached the bed and perceived with a shudder that the poor woman was unconscious, perhaps, as she had no eyes for any body but her darling Emma.

"O Effie! Frank Harcourt indeed! Why, he scarcely gives me a passing glance when you are by, and yet you talk of his laying siege to my heart. You are jealous, Effie, because you saw him talking to me in the garden last evening. And all she said to me was, 'Fray, is Miss Stanwood ill, that she is not with you to-night?'"

something must be done immediately, or I fear what you so much dread will happen."

She dispatched Henry for some wood, while she basked herself in trying to restore to animation the unconscious woman. Henry soon returned, and a blazing fire quickly sent its cheerful light around the room. At last, Mrs. Leighton opened her eyes, and saw the cheerful fire, and her children sitting comfortably by it; she raised her eyes to the face of Mrs. Stanwood with a look of intense gratitude, and then pointing with her thin fingers towards heaven, she faintly murmured:—"He will reward you, who he giveth to the poor, lendeth to the Lord." Then rousing, as if by a sudden impulse, she said:

"Kind lady, I know not who you are, but I feel that I am indebted to your kindness for my present comfort, and before death shall have sealed my life forever, I wish to say a few words with regard to my circumstances. I was the daughter of worthy parents who lived in a pleasant village not many miles from here, and in my seventeenth year, having been introduced to Henry Leighton, he won my young heart and not many months elapsed before I became his bride. We moved to the city, and for a while he was my ardent heart could desire; I thought him perfect, and was happy. But soon he became cold and indifferent, and all the love he once felt for me seemed to have left his heart. One day he being colder than usual, I asked him the reason, and he told me he had only married me because he took a fancy to my pretty face, but he was tired of that now. Not even the birth of our children seemed to soften him, and he went on from bad to worse, spending his evenings at the gaming table, while I was obliged to toil from day to day to support myself and children. At length he suddenly left me, and I heard nothing from him until after three years, when news reached me that he had died and was buried and slone in a foreign land. I continued to support myself by sewing until my health gave way, and I came to this place, and having spent all my little savings, I was reduced to the situation you now find me in. Ere another hour I shall be cold in death, and my poor children, I could go without a murmur but for them!"

Overcome by her feelings and the exertion of speaking, she sank back exhausted. Mrs. Stanwood had been very much excited during her recital, and when the poor woman had finished, she bent over her, and said in an almost whisper:—"Fear not, by the love I once bore their father, I will try to cherish and protect his children." The dying woman pressed her hand in token of her gratitude, and had scarcely time to call her children and fold them in a fond embrace, before her weary spirit winged its heavenward flight.

"And this is the wife of the proud and brilliant Henry Leighton, the lover of my youth, who so cruelly won my love and then deserted me!" murmured Mrs. Stanwood, as she bent over the corpse. "O God, the hour of retribution surely comes, and mysterious are the ways of thy providence."

With the assistance of a woman she summoned from the next room, the body of Mrs. Leighton was decently laid out, and leaving the woman to watch that none entered the room, she led the sobbing children to her carriage, and soon had the motherless ones seated by her own cheerful fire with her own Effie.

The following day a small but decent band of mourners followed the remains of Mrs. Leighton to her last resting-place. And as Mrs. Stanwood returned from the grave with the orphans, she realized the fearful responsibility resting upon her, from which she dared not shrink.

In course of time, Henry Leighton was put with a rich merchant of Mrs. Stanwood's acquaintance, who not long afterwards went to the East Indies, taking Henry with him. Emma's sweet temper won the love of all who knew her, and each succeeding year brought forth new charms of person and mind. Effie loved her as a sister, and Mrs. Stanwood never showed or felt towards her anything but a mother's love.

One fine summer afternoon some years after the events just narrated, two lovely girls stood arm in arm on the piazza of Col. Stanwood's country residence; and one may recognize in that fairy figure and sweet face, around which those golden curls are floating in the gentle breeze, and in those lovely eyes beaming with love and gentleness, Emma Leighton. By her side is the quietly figure of Effie-Stanwood. Effie is much changed since we last saw her, in beauty of person. As she stands, her head is slightly thrown back, her rich black hair parted smoothly on her marble brow, and gathered in a knot at the back of her finely shaped head; her eyes sparkling with vivacity, and her lips parted in a smile, showing her beautiful teeth.

"Come, Emma," said Effie, putting her arm round her slight waist, "come, let us take a walk this pleasant afternoon to the little maple grove, where we enjoyed so many pleasant chats last summer. I hope old Winter has seen fit to tuck it gently with his frosty fingers."

Emma started slightly as her companion finished speaking, for she had been indulging in a little fit of abstraction, and had heard only half of what had been said to her, and she answered dreamily:

"Yes, Effie, nothing would give me greater pleasure than to walk. We will get our bonnets and be off."

Effie scanned her face rather mischievously as she said, "What in the world makes you so dreamy, to-day? You go about with the air of one lost to all present things. Say, has Frank Harcourt been laying siege to that little heart of yours? And if so, what will become of my poor brother Edgar? For ever since he returned from his travels, he has had no eyes or ears for any body but his darling Emma."

"O Effie! Frank Harcourt indeed! Why, he scarcely gives me a passing glance when you are by, and yet you talk of his laying siege to my heart. You are jealous, Effie, because you saw him talking to me in the garden last evening. And all she said to me was, 'Fray, is Miss Stanwood ill, that she is not with you to-night?'"

As you are always together, I thought there must be some urgent reason, especially as she likes moonlight rambles. There now, don't you see it is not poor me who attracts the brilliant Frank Harcourt. You do well to avail yourself of your boot-lacing to hide your blushes."

The girls indulged in this bantering until they reached the maple grove, where, seating themselves on a seat, they threw off their bonnets and gave themselves up to the enjoyment of being in the open air. Emma sank into a brown study, and being teased by Effie to reveal the cause, she said:

"I had a dream last night, and it has been haunting me ever since, it seemed so life-like. I cannot get rid of the impression that it will come to pass in some way. I dreamed I was walking in this very grove, and suddenly an old wrinkled woman stood before me. Laying her bony fingers on my arm and peering into my face, she said: 'there is a great surprise in store for you; and Effie Stanwood whom you love so much, in a twelve month will wed one who shall kill your hearts close to the ever. You look incredulous now, but the time will surely come when you will think of my words and know how true they were.' Thus saying, she vanished, leaving me in a state of bewilderment. If my dear brother had not been taken away from us by death, I could then see how my dream might come true, but now—"

"Who knows what will turn up? But bark, I hear voices, and my name is plain as can be," said Effie. "You know the old adage, 'Listeners never hear any good of themselves,' and I am going to hide and prove the truth of it."

The two young girls had scarcely got concealed when two young men came along.

"I say, George, that girl shall be mine by fair means or foul, if for no other reason than to thwart Frank Harcourt, who is a frequent visitor of late at Colonel Stanwood's. Yes, Miss Stanwood shall, ere one month passes over her head, be the willing bride of William Hammond."

"Nonsense," replied his friend. "Miss Stanwood would not look at us. You are only a bowing acquaintance, and never as yet have received an invitation to the house."

"Never mind, I can get into the good graces of her brother Edgar, and after all, I fancy by her looks she could be easily won."

Effie started to hear no more, but indignantly seizing the hand of Emma, they stole back to their former seat.

"Then I can be easily won, can I? We shall see. Did you ever hear such unparalleled impudence? Before another month, I shall be the willing bride of William Hammond. Monstrous!"

After this burst of indignation, Effie sat for some time in deep thought, then starting up, she exclaimed: "Now I have a plan. You know Cousin Alice Stanwood is to visit us next week, and while she is here, I will give a party. Edgar shall invite this pompous braggart, and we will pass Alice off for myself, and then he will feel rather chagrined, I think, when he finds, after all his boasting, he has been trapped."

What say you, Emma, do you think my plan feasible?"

"By all means, and I will assist you, for he ought to be punished."

Hearing the tea bell ringing at this moment, the two girls started for the house full of their plans. While the family are quietly sipping their tea, we will endeavor to explain to our readers the reasons of William Hammond's enmity to Frank Harcourt.

In his boyhood, William Hammond was a famous cricket player, and for years enjoyed his triumphs without a rival. He had a very fiery temper, and considered being beat at a cricket match the worst affliction that could befall him, and more than once was heard to vow vengeance on him who should rob him of his laurels.

The family of the Harcourts moved to the village, and a cricket match coming off soon after, Frank Harcourt was invited by some of the boys to join in the sport. He did so, and in an unlucky moment, so at least it became to him, he won the game, and was carried off the field amid the shouts of triumph from the boys, for they gloried in the defeat of William Hammond, who was so accustomed to triumph by his arrogance. Ever afterwards it seemed the settled purpose of William's life to cross Frank's path at all times, and thwart his every plan. Instead of his bitterness being softened by time, it seemed to increase with his growth, and at the time of our story, he had arrived at manhood, and outwardly was very prepossessing, yet within his heart was filled with malignant fire. The reason of his wishing to win Effie for his bride, was not because he had any love for her, but he had of late noticed Frank Harcourt's attentions to her. And then Colonel Stanwood was rich, and if he gained Effie, his fortunes, which were on the wane, would be considerably brightened, hence the resolution we have spoken of.

"Alice, my dear, are you ready?" said an elderly lady, as she entered her daughter's room, where she was dressing apparently for a journey.

"Yes, mother, all ready but putting on my bonnet. How soon will the stage be here?"

"In a very few moments, for it has already arrived at the top of the hill."

"O mother! And here the affectionate girl threw her arms around the neck of her mother—"

"I anticipate being very happy during my visit, but I shall think of you so often and imagine that you are lonely without me. Do write to me every week, and I will improve every means of communication with you."

"Yes, my dear, you shall have a letter from me quite as often as I imagine you will find time to answer me. But Alice, remember, since your father's failure and our removal from A—, the communication between the families has been somewhat broken, and I do not know how your Cousin Effie, whom I have heard has grown to be a brilliant and accomplished lady, will receive her portly cousin, whom she has not seen for many years."

"If I thought she would treat me coldly, mother, or be less glad to see me on account of our altered circumstances, I am sure I would not burden her with my presence; but she has answered my letter so kindly, begging me to come and stay with her, I cannot think your fears have any foundation."

"I hope not, Alice; and indeed, if she possesses her mother's generous disposition, she will receive you with open arms. I did not say that you should part spirits, but if such a reception should be yours, you may not be disappointed."

"To stage ready," shouted the driver of that clumsy vehicle, as he drove up to the door. Alice, hastily imprinting a kiss on her mother's cheek, rushed down stairs, and was soon on her way to A—, seated in a corner of the coach.

Her heart beat alternately between hope and fear as she neared her uncle's residence, for perhaps Effie might be the proud cousin her mother had foretold. All her forebodings vanished like mist, as Colonel Stanwood and his wife gave her a kiss of welcome, and led her into the drawing-room, where she was clasped in the arms of Effie, and before an hour had passed, the two were conversing as freely as if they had never been separated. Alice thought no more of college, after tea, the girls hid to their rustic seats, their favorite place for holding counsel.

The projected party was to come off in three days, and Alice must be instructed in the part she was to play. Effie briefly told her the plan. Alice at first had many scruples about assuming the position of Effie. But she yielded at last to the pleading of Effie and Emma, and it was agreed that she was to receive the attentions of Mr. Hammond.

They had just settled all their plans, when Edgar Stanwood made his appearance, accompanied by Frank Harcourt. They all remained talking till the lengthening shadows warned them of the lateness of the hour. Edgar managed to get near Emma unperceived, as he thought, but Effie noticed it, and seeing Alice by the arm and calling Frank together, she left them to enjoy the deepening twilight together. Emma rose to follow them, but Edgar gently detained her. Taking her unresisting hand in his, he poured into her ear for the first time his tale of love. Emma blushed and stammered. She murmured something about being only a dependent, but Edgar banished all those fears by assuring her that he had often heard his parents wish that this might happen. When they left the spot, now doubly dear to Emma, they were betrothed lovers.

It is the evening of the party, and the three girls have just finished dressing. There stands Effie robed in white, with no ornaments save a half blown damask rose, peeping forth from among her raven tresses. Notwithstanding the simplicity of her dress, there is the quietly bearing which distinguishes Effie. Alice is leaning against the window, almost bewildered by the brilliancy of her appearance. She is attired in a tissue of costly fabric, over an under dress of white silk, while among her azure curls flash diamonds of great brilliancy. On her neck and arms are rich jewels, and altogether, she looks the personation of Effie Stanwood, and her sweet face is lighted up with such an inward joy she looks like a girl who has more than ever. Just now Edgar rushed into the room, and kissing the girls, beginning with Emma of course, he announced that he had made a great acquisition to the party in shape of a young man from the West Indies.

"Now, sister, do your best, for I have set my heart upon your making a conquest of the handsome stranger."

By this time the company were assembling, and they descended to the drawing-room. Emma and Effie were standing by a door which led into a beautiful conservatory, when Edgar came up with the stranger, and touching Effie on the shoulder, he said:

"Effie, allow me to introduce to you my friend, Mr. Leighton." Effie returned his salutation with her usual dignity.

"And now," he said, "I will make you acquainted with my adopted sister, or perhaps I should say, Miss Emma Leighton."

Emma, when she heard his name, started, and a death-like paleness overspread her face. "It must be, thought she, for surely there is the same noble brow, and the same long hair I used to love to arrange when a child. O, it should be my long lost brother."

With these thoughts flitting through her brain, she almost unconsciously returned the pressure of his hand, while, he the moment he looked at her face, his gaze became riveted there.

"Pardon me," said he, turning to Effie and Edgar, "but will you three step into the conservatory? I wish to ask a question."

"Certainly," they and they stepped into it, letting fall the heavy curtains so as to shut them from the observation of others.

"Had you ever, Miss Leighton, a brother by the name of Henry?"

"Yes, do you know anything about him?" Emma replied, hoping and more than half believing that her hopes were about to be realized.

"I am he," O, my dear brother," exclaimed Emma, and soon she was sobbing on his manly breast.

After she had become calm, he related to them briefly, how the rumor had originated in regard to his death. He told them that his patron had died and left him his immense fortune, and now he had returned to his native land.

In high spirits they again joined the company, and the news of the returned brother spread with joyful rapidity through the room. While these events were transpiring in one part of the room, in another, William Hammond was laying siege to the heart of Miss Stanwood, who, to his great and unlooked-for delight, was uncommonly gracious, and he caught more than once the angry glance of Frank Harcourt following them.

Frank had been let into the secret and played the jealous lover admirably. The party was not confined to the drawing-room, but wandered at will through the splendid grounds. Miss Stanwood accepted the offered arm of Mr. Hammond for a promenade; after walking about some time, William led her to an arbor, and seated himself beside her. Ever rash and impetuous, and at this time highly elated by the attention the haughty belle had bestowed on him, he fell on his knees, exclaiming:

"O Miss Stanwood, could you know how the beauty and sweetness of that precious face has entered into my very soul, and how, for months I have loved you in secret, never daring to ask an interview with you until now, you would certainly listen favorably to me. O, can you, will you be mine? I only murmur that sweet word 'yes,' and I will instantly seek your father, the colonel, and know my fate; for should he refuse, my life will be a blank."

Withdrawing her hand which he had seized, she said with coldness: "You must labor under some mistake; I only arrived here the day before yesterday, and as for my father, he died nine years ago."

Hammond sprang to his feet, and looking at her said: "Are you not Miss Stanwood, daughter of Colonel Stanwood?"

"Undoubtedly I am Miss Stanwood, niece of Colonel Stanwood, not daughter."

He stood confounded, and while gazing upon her beauty, he felt that while intending to thwart Frank Harcourt, he had lost his heart. He then asked her if she was perfectly indifferent to him. She gave an evasive but not wholly unfavorable answer, and satisfied with that for the time, they returned to the house.

The party at Colonel Stanwood's was the commencement of a series that followed each other in rapid succession, and never had the good people of the place known such a brilliant season. Horseback rides and water parties were the order of the day. The Misses Stanwood and Emma Leighton attracted their usual share of admiration. Frank Harcourt, as formerly, was often seen wending his way to the dwelling of Colonel Stanwood, but rumor says he has long since resigned all pretensions to the hand of Effie, and that his place is filled by Henry Leighton. How says Frank finds his attraction in the sweet Alice?

The weeks flew rapidly by, and Alice, yielding to the entreaties of her friends, still remains with them. She often wondered at herself being willing to stay so long away from her mother; but at such times the image of Frank Harcourt would rise before her and she would yield to the pleasure of being near him. She still kept up her flirtation, if I may call it so—with William Hammond. He seemed sure of the prize, and dreamed of no rival.

One afternoon towards the last of August, a picnic was held in a neighboring grove, as a sort of farewell party, it being the last one of the season. Effie and Emma were present with their lovers, their faces radiant with that happiness which fills the hearts of young people during the first weeks or months of their betrothal. Colonel Stanwood and Lady were also there, as sort of honorary members, and they moved about among the other people, their hearts filled with joy to overflowing, for in the projected union of their children, their highest wishes were to be realized. On this occasion William Hammond was more attentive than ever to Alice, and was constantly seeking an opportunity to declare his passion a second time. Frank Harcourt was sitting beside Alice in a retired part of the grove, when through an opening, their looks being with the enemy approaching in their direction. Hastily concealing himself behind a tree he awaited his approach. William perceiving Alice alone, immediately joined her, and like Frank we will listen to their conversation.

"Dearest Alice, I hear that you are to leave here soon, and now I cannot longer be kept in suspense, with regard to my fate. I need not say again how much I love you. I will love you with all the deep, overwhelming affection of a passionate nature. Tell me, does your heart return that affection? Can I ever hope to call you my wife?"

"Mr. Hammond, I have reason to believe that the motives which first prompted you to seek my presence, were of the basest kind; that you have loved me much I love you, but I assure you, I would never trust much to the love, or give my hand to one who merely for revenge sought me. I have permitted your attentions, merely to give you a lesson. My final answer is this, I can never become your wife, for I shall ere a month pass, become the bride of Frank Harcourt."

Stung as if by an Adler, he sprang to his feet, while his face grew livid with passion, and he said: "Has he dared to rival me again, and rob me of the only being I ever loved! The thought is maddening. Alice Stanwood, I leave you, but I bear with me a hatred and hope for vengeance, that will sometime break out and may its effects fall on him who has ever been my evil spirit."

As he passed the tree where Frank was concealed, Frank stepped out. William with a cry of rage sprang forward, and with one blow of his fist, he struck him to the earth, and springing over him was soon out of sight.

Alice saw the blow and fall, and with a scream of terror she rushed to his side. Her cries soon brought assistance, and ere long Frank was restored to consciousness, but his head was badly cut, and he was conveyed to the residence of Colonel Stanwood, where he remained until entirely recovered.

Nothing was ever heard of William Hammond, except that he had departed for a distant land. Colonel Stanwood soon after returned to the city; and passing over a few weeks, we will visit them there, for, judging from the brilliant illumination, something pleasant must be going on. As we enter the room, we see Colonel Stanwood and his still lovely wife both looking the same as when we first introduced her to you, save that she wears a light cap to conceal the few gray hairs that are sprinkled among her jetty locks. The mother of Alice is there, also, and many representatives of the Harcourt family, and all place frequently to the door. It opens and three lovely maidens, leaning upon their lovers' arms enter, and give greeting to the other side of the room, and stand before the man of God. The ceremonies are concluded, and Edgar and Emma Stanwood, Effie and Henry Leighton, Alice and Frank Harcourt, are husband and wife, and each felt their responsibility, as fell the solemn words, "What God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."

[Written for The Flag of our Union.]

BALLAD.

BY W. L. ROBINSON.

I sat aside by side with my loved one at eve,
And the stars they came out in the blue;
And, like a love note, the breeze came to greet me,
And soft fell the cool, silver dew.

"How fair are you stars in the blue above—
How lovely their journey across!"
"I think not of them, when I look on you, love,
For lovelier, far lovelier are you."

"Ah, cheerful and dark as a cloud-covered night,
Was my life, till you rose to my view!
Then my soul, it was bathed in a beautiful light,
And a bliss, that till then, I never knew."

"How softly the breeze to the night's ear complains—
How sweetly the flowers do they woo!"
"I never have heard it—'t is not my pain,
For I am a kind lover too."

"And there's not a bloom, however sweet it may be,
That the summer around us may strew,
For its beauty or scent, I thought I win from me,
While I know a sweeter one—*you*."

"How softly, after the day's laboring heat,
On the earth falls the cool, silver dew."
"On my own withered heart fall more softly sweet
Your love and your sympathy true."

"At an hour like this, I best feel their control—
Ever young, ever fresh, ever new;
And I know the mild power that binds all my soul
In the bond of affection to *you*."

"Yet strong are the charms of the soft summer night—
Its stars, and its bloom, and its dew."
"But lovelier the maiden that gives them their light,
To me, sweet, as well as to *you*."

"With you as my side, love, I envy no bliss
That the happiest ever yet knew;
And I'll seal my devotion to you with a kiss,
And ever remain true and true."

[Written for The Flag of our Union.]

CONSULTING ONE'S WIFE.

—O. B.—

TWO HEADS BETTER THAN ONE.

BY MRS. M. E. ROBINSON.

FRANCIS ABBOTT and Arthur Bliss were both active young men, and engaged in a business which afforded them a very good income. They had mutually agreed "that it is about good for man to be alone," and at about the same time had entered the matrimonial state. They were not more unlike in person than in character, and the motives which governed them in taking a partner for life, differed as widely. Though we would not assert that Arthur Bliss did not love his wife as much as he was capable of loving any one, yet it must be confessed that he married more for the sake of having a home, as it is called, and securing some one to attend to his own comfort and convenience, than for any other reason. He had but an unfavorable opinion of the equality of woman with man, and considered her more as a necessary evil—a kind of dependent, whose presence and care might possibly make life more endurable, but one whose opinions and wishes were of no possible consequence. His wife knew nothing about his business, and as he considered it extremely detrimental to his dignity to make her a confidant, or ask the advice of one he regarded so much inferior to himself in point of judgment, he could not be expected to conform her wishes to his circumstances.

She was a young, inexperienced girl, with very imperfect ideas of life and its many trials, accustomed to spend money without appreciating its value—very fond of dress and admiration, and looked upon matrimony as the sum total of human felicity. She was not of a reflective disposition, and in no danger of becoming a blue stocking; this on the whole, was gratifying to her husband, who disliked all kinds of reading except the news of the day, and on his part ran no risk of injuring his brain by too deep thought.

Mrs. Bliss was a clever, easy sort of a body, as easily pleased as a child, and excessively relied the little nothings with which her husband entertained her.

Francis Abbott, while choosing a wife, endeavored to select one for whose ignorance he need not blush. He wanted a disinterested friend, a loving companion, an unselfish adviser; one whose judgment he could rely upon; whose counsel, based upon good sense, she should have no cause to doubt; whose reasoning powers were as much entitled to respect as his own. He prized beauty, but he valued an intelligent, well-informed mind more highly. Being liberally educated himself, he wished his wife to sympathize in his pursuits, and be able to assist him if occasion demanded.

Though the two young men differed so essentially in sentiment and taste, yet being brought together by circumstances, they were very good friends.

Mrs. Bliss and Mrs. Abbott were also in the habit of visiting each other frequently, though the latter, while conforming to custom and good breeding, experienced but little benefit or pleasure from the society of the other; who talked of nothing but the latest fashion, and the splendid parties she hoped to attend and give.

"It is really quite a treat to meet you on the street without a woman hanging on your arm!" exclaimed Bliss, as he stepped a moment while passing his friend Abbott.

"I hardly know what you mean," replied the latter, doubtfully.

"You needn't look so serious about the matter, continued Bliss, laughingly, "for is it isn't of sufficient importance? I merely remarked that it was something unusual to see you out of your place of business, unattended by your better half, as somebody has facetiously expressed it."

"I value my wife's society very highly, my friend," rejoined Abbott, earnestly, "and during the two years we have been wedded, it has never proved irksome to me."

"I am glad you are so well pleased," resumed the other, lightly, "but I like to be my own master. Every one to their taste, however. But come," he added, "walk with me a short distance, I have something to show you."

"I would, with pleasure, but I promised Mrs. Abbott that I would be home to fulfill an engagement at exactly half past four, and it now wants but fifteen minutes to the time. You know I like to have others punctual, and of course must set a good example."

"You'll have to go then, I suppose, for a woman never forgets a promise," said Bliss, somewhat sarcastically. "But you should do as I do; never make promises and then you won't break them."

"My appointments are perfectly agreeable, I assure you; so don't waste the night's reprieve," replied the other, good humoredly.

"I took a house in L— Place yesterday, on a year's lease," resumed Bliss, without heeding the last remark, "and hearing you say that you intended removing soon, I thought I would like to have you look at a house near the one I have secured. It is just vacated, and will be taken up immediately."

"I am obliged to you, friend Bliss," replied the young man, "it would be pleasant to be neighbors, but in case I liked the house, I should not feel at liberty, or at least, should rather not engage it, until my wife had examined the premises. Ladies, you know, are sometimes particular about their rooms."

"I wonder, Abbott, if you ever yawn without your wife's consent?" asked Bliss, contemptuously.

"I consider my wife as my best friend, and in matters of importance I always consult her. I have no reason to doubt the disinterestedness of her advice, and no one has my welfare more at heart," replied the person addressed, firmly. "Recollect, my friend," he added, after a moment's pause, "that your wife's happiness should be consulted as well as your own, and that, justly, she is entitled to your confidence."

"No such thing!" retorted the other, with warmth. "I've no idea of telling a woman all about my affairs, and have every gossip in the vicinity retelling the news the next hour. No, I am too wise for that; I keep my secrets to myself."

"A sensible, right-minded woman would not do that," said Abbott, with a smile. "Trust your wife, show her that you have confidence in her judgment and prudence, and I believe you will have no cause to regret it."

The speaker turned away, and Arthur Bliss, with an incredulous smile at the mistaken notions of his friend, walked off in an opposite direction, wondering how it was possible for a clear-headed, sensible man, as Abbott was, to give up untrammelled freedom of action, with no little apparent unwillingness. But Bliss believed he could unravel the knotty point; he did not in the least doubt that Abbott was under strict female discipline and surveillance; that he felt it imperatively necessary to give to his wife a faithful account of the various duties he had discharged through the day, with those he contemplated on the morrow. Yes, melancholy as it seemed, a wife positive voice than he had previously spoken.

For a reply, his wife told the way below and asked him to look around. It was then the middle of a clear day, but one could not see distinctly across the kitchen even at that time, without the aid of a lamp; the room being entirely obscured by a tall, brick building, which stood within a few feet of the house, leaving but a very narrow, close, back entrance.

The countenance of Arthur Bliss fell. He had been persuaded to take the house by the idea of "an agreeable location," and the extremely moderate rent which was demanded for the same. He had made no inquiries, examined the premises but imperfectly at a late hour, without his wife as we have seen, and of course had no means of ascertaining that it had been without a lease for many months, and in the hands of a hard landlord. But now he had a strong presentiment that he had "paid too dear for the whistle," and to make matters worse, his wife was in the secret and would not soon forget it. Nothing was to be done now but to make the best of it; he was much too proud to own his mistake, for that would be compromising the judgment, which he often found occasion to speak of.

"You see that women do know something after all, Mr. Bliss," said his better half, very significantly.

"They know enough to find fault," grumbled the gentleman, impatiently. "You have no doubt exaggerated the matter; the house is probably as good as the generality of residences, and with a little repairing, will do very well. At any rate, I have hired it, and shall abide by my decision."

And he did abide by it, although he privately made many efforts to annul the contract, but in vain. The landlord was exacting and knew on which side his interest lay; consequently, Bliss had but poor success.

Let us look in a moment upon our friend Abbott and his lady.

"Were you aware that Bliss contemplated moving?" asked the former.

"I was not; and I think his wife must be ignorant of the fact, or she would have mentioned it this morning when she called," replied Mrs. Bliss.

"She undoubtedly knows nothing of it. I believe her husband never consults her upon any point. He has no great idea of woman's capabilities, you know, and I really think he would not be very much benefited by her advice," replied Abbott, with a smile. "Her opinion might be worth something respecting a ribbon or a new hat, however."

"I think you do her wrong, Francis," said his wife, earnestly. "Mrs. Bliss is a sensible, active, intelligent woman, and I think it is in the wrong, and has taken the liberty of telling him so. But he considers himself infallible, and my words made no perceptible impression."

"The conversation was here interrupted by the entrance of the subject of their remarks."

"I came in almost on purpose to ask you a question," said Mrs. Bliss, after Abbott had left the room. "It may sound curiously to you, but I want to know if your husband ever consults you respecting his business, or in fact, anything which interests you both?"

"Often," was the smiling reply of Mrs. Abbott.

"I do you know all about his affairs?"

"Certainly. I don't know how to make my wants and purchases correspond to his circumstances, were I ignorant of them."

"How queer!" exclaimed the visitor. "Why, I never thought of doing such a thing, and my husband never told me a word about his affairs since I married him. He says women know nothing about such things, and that it isn't proper for them to show curiosity about matters they can't understand."

Mrs. Abbott made no reply.

"Of course you don't understand what he means, when he talks about stocks and bills, accounts and receipts, do you?" she continued, in the same earnest manner. "I've heard them mentioned, but I never like to trouble my head trying to remember them."

"I do my best to understand them," rejoined Mrs. Abbott, striving to repress a smile.

"I think he'll tell me when he leaves another house," added Mrs. Bliss, after relating her friend what had taken place.

"It is really unfortunate; I am sorry for you, but the best of people will make mistakes sometimes," replied Mrs. Abbott, who always endeavored to comfort her friends and others satisfied with what they could not remedy.

"I'm sure he deserves it all, for he might have told me; but I shall have the worst of it," said Mrs. Bliss, left the house with a regretful sigh and a lengthened face.

The house was taken in L— Place, and some seventy-five dollars laid out in repairs to render it passably comfortable for the winter. Every room smoked terribly, and invariably after a rain, tubs, barrels and boxes were found floating round in the cellar; while so many disagreeable were connected with the house generally, that Mrs. Bliss found it necessary to change her help very often; for they all declared it "impossible to live in such a dark, smoky, dreary kitchen."

Mrs. Bliss bore her misfortunes in the shape of an ill-humored wife, crying children—for who blames a child for crying with his eyes full of smoke—and impatient servants, with the patience of a martyr; for he had no one to blame but himself. He pursued the same course, and kept his own counsel. If his wife expressed a desire for a certain article, sometimes he would refuse her abruptly, without assigning any reason, and sometimes he would comply, make his own choice, and come home a thing which was no favor in her eyes. Once she mentioned to a neighbor in his hearing, that she would prefer to attend some other church; so without ascertaining which way her inclinations tended, he hired a pew in Rev. Mr. R.'s church, and discovered after having done so, that she excessively disliked the preacher, and could not be persuaded to sit in his ministry.

One thing led on to another, and Mrs. Bliss, from a good-tempered, well-disposed woman, became irritable, impatient and discontented with her lot in life. As has been mentioned, she was very fond of dress, and thus far her husband had been quite indulgent in that respect. But all of a sudden, he seemed disinclined to part with his money, talked of woman's extravagance, looked sternly at her, and allowed her but a small part of the sum she had usually received for pocket-money. Though he did occasionally hint that his circumstances demanded some sacrifice on her part, yet these casual remarks were so vague and unsatisfactory, that they were considered as of no importance. She felt indignant at his repeated refusal to satisfy her wishes, and determined to do as she felt inclined.

"He has had his will long enough; now I will have mine," she soliloquized. "He expects me to coincide with his wishes and demands without the least explanation. As I am not allowed my say in any matter, however simple, why I shall take the liberty of acting on my own responsibility."

She did so; and during the next three months had run up a bill of two hundred and fifty dollars in her husband's name at a dry goods store, where his credit was well established. Mrs. Bliss had no qualms of conscience in regard to this proceeding. She had not one serious thought that his business might be on the decrease, and that his seeming liberality might be accounted for on the score of prudence. No; she thought him a rich man, and considered it justifiable to right herself in any way; for that she regarded herself as a wronged and aggrieved woman there could be no doubt. Had she not urged him in vain to allow her means to give an evening's entertainment to a few friends, and had not that request been at once decidedly and as she thought, harshly refused? Had she not mildly suggested that the parlors needed new carpets, and received for answer that they were "quite as good as he could afford," and that she should be satisfied with the old ones? Had she not suggested that the parlors needed new carpets, and received for answer that they were "quite as good as he could afford," and that she should be satisfied with the old ones? Had she not suggested that the parlors needed new carpets, and received for answer that they were "quite as good as he could afford," and that she should be satisfied with the old ones?

"How is business?" inquired Abbott, carelessly, as he and Bliss again met on their way home.

"Dull enough," responded the other, very gloomily.

"Unusually so?" added Abbott, as he remarked the careworn and anxious looking face of his companion.

"Yes; money is scarce, and I find it very difficult to meet my payments. Things can't go on in this way a great while; they must either mend or grow worse; and most probably the latter," was the desponding reply.

"Don't be discouraged; darkness precedes the dawn," resumed Abbott, with cheerfulness. "Be patient and persevering, and all will come right at last."

"That does very well for you to say, for you have not the obstacles to encounter daily that I have. Your wife is a reasonable, prudent woman, and assists instead of opposing you. A man can never succeed in anything who is un-

fortunate enough to be burdened with a wife, extravagant wife."

Bliss spoke bitterly, for that day the bill he had mentioned had been presented, and he added to the embarrassment under which he labored in money matters. He was more and more convinced of the frivolity and heartlessness of his wife's character; not taking into consideration the evil, that instead of striving to lessen the evil, he might possibly have helped to increase it.

"A good wife is indeed a treasure, my friend," said Abbott, earnestly. "But I perceive no good reason why yours is not capable of becoming all you wish."

"O you are quite mistaken about the matter; it is an utter impossibility," replied the other, with emphasis. "People don't change their organizations so suddenly. But why do I talk upon a subject which cannot possibly interest you?" he added.

"But it does interest me, nevertheless," was the warmly spoken rejoinder of Abbott. "Pardon me for asking you a question," he continued. "You say your business is much embarrassed; have you communicated the fact freely and without reserve to your wife?"

"Not in so many words, perhaps," said Bliss, hesitatingly; "but I have said enough to make her understand that economy is desirable, and extravagance reprehensible."

"I fear that is not sufficient. As you have never been in the habit of communicating to her your movements and intentions, it is but natural that she should pay but little attention to a few disconnected hints. Besides, she may have felt a little piqued at some unnecessary denial of her wishes. Take my advice, friend Bliss. Seek your wife; confide in her; for once trust to the prudence you have never made trial of; tell her frankly you are situated, and what is required of her. Reason with her kindly and dispassionately. Point out to her wherein she may have been wrong, at the same time telling her a better way. Look her faults, and thank her for her inexperience. If you find it necessary to refuse a request, tell her pleasantly why it is refused; it is her due, and such an explanation will serve to convince her that you consider her a reasonable being and worthy of confidence. Just try the experiment, and I will warrant you succeed."

"I haven't a bit of faith in the scheme, but as you are so sure, and it can do no harm, I will try seriously of it," said Bliss, as he smiled at the earnestness of his friend.

"Let not another day pass till you have done so," added Abbott, as they separated.

As he walked slowly along, Arthur Bliss seriously reflected upon what had been said, though his wife revolved at the thought of doing what he had never done—consulting a woman. He had always regarded it as an honor due to the weaker sex when the stronger condescended to ask their advice, or make them a part in their deliberations. But to satisfy Abbott, and to assure himself of the inefficiency of the former's proposal, he resolved to do as he had been requested. No positive harm could result from the experiment, and he should then have the satisfaction of knowing that the truth of his theory was settled beyond a doubt.

He found his wife looking rather more thoughtful than usual, and drawing a chair near her, he seated himself and commenced.

"You spoke of a desire to give a party the other day, Eliza; I should be happy to gratify you in it, if you wish my power."

"Very likely," she laconically replied, without the least change of feature.

"I should indeed, and no one would be more pleased than myself to see new carpets upon the parlors as you mentioned," he continued.

"I haven't the least doubt of it," said Mrs. Bliss, in precisely the same tone, and without raising her eyes from her work.

"Just what I expected!" thought the husband. "She doesn't appreciate a single word I say."

"But you're on the old track, precisely," whispered something. "No wonder you don't succeed. Talk more to the point. Appeal to her better feelings."

"I don't believe she's got any," he mentally answered.

"Make the attempt," appealed the inward monitor.

"Eliza," he continued, more earnestly, after a pause, "do you candidly think that I would refuse you any reasonable request were it possible for me to grant it?"

"I don't know, I'm sure," she replied, despondently.

"What do you think?" he inquired, despondently.

"Why I think—I think that you would," replied Mrs. Bliss, hesitatingly, yet frankly, perceiving some satisfaction.

"Have I done so?" he asked, regarding her attentively.

"I had no fault to find when we were first married," was the evasive reply. "But why do you ask me such questions?" she added, evincing some astonishment.

"Because I think you have misconstrued my conduct. You probably think me a rich man, and you don't?"

Mrs. Bliss looked at her husband with genuine surprise, not unminged with curiosity, but made no reply.

"I perceive you think it a strange question, and perhaps will hardly credit my words when I assert them. But far from being so at the present time. Some months since I was a heavy loser by the failure of an extensive firm."

"But you never told me about it," exclaimed Mrs. Bliss, who scarcely believed the evidence of her ears.

"That was not my only loss, by several," he continued, seemingly unconscious of her exclamation. "But it is a very dry day, I am in debt. There is a fair prospect of my following the example of many others—becoming bankrupt. And to make the matter worse, my wife reproaches me for not being able to supply her liberally with money."

"But I knew nothing of this, Arthur?" cried the lady, with great earnestness. "Why did you not

fortune enough to be burdened with a wife, extravagant wife."

Bliss spoke bitterly, for that day the bill he had mentioned had been presented, and he added to the embarrassment under which he labored in money matters. He was more and more convinced of the frivolity and heartlessness of his wife's character; not taking into consideration the evil, that instead of striving to lessen the evil, he might possibly have helped to increase it.

"A good wife is indeed a treasure, my friend," said Abbott, earnestly. "But I perceive no good reason why yours is not capable of becoming all you wish."

"O you are quite mistaken about the matter; it is an utter impossibility," replied the other, with emphasis. "People don't change their organizations so suddenly. But why do I talk upon a subject which cannot possibly interest you?" he added.

"But it does interest me, nevertheless," was the warmly spoken rejoinder of Abbott. "Pardon me for asking you a question," he continued. "You say your business is much embarrassed; have you communicated the fact freely and without reserve to your wife?"

"Not in so many words, perhaps," said Bliss, hesitatingly; "but I have said enough to make her understand that economy is desirable, and extravagance reprehensible."

"I fear that is not sufficient. As you have never been in the habit of communicating to her your movements and intentions, it is but natural that she should pay but little attention to a few disconnected hints. Besides, she may have felt a little piqued at some unnecessary denial of her wishes. Take my advice, friend Bliss. Seek your wife; confide in her; for once trust to the prudence you have never made trial of; tell her frankly you are situated, and what is required of her. Reason with her kindly and dispassionately. Point out to her wherein she may have been wrong, at the same time telling her a better way. Look her faults, and thank her for her inexperience. If you find it necessary to refuse a request, tell her pleasantly why it is refused; it is her due, and such an explanation will serve to convince her that you consider her a reasonable being and worthy of confidence. Just try the experiment, and I will warrant you succeed."

"I haven't a bit of faith in the scheme, but as you are so sure, and it can do no harm, I will try seriously of it," said Bliss, as he smiled at the earnestness of his friend.

"Let not another day pass till you have done so," added Abbott, as they separated.

As he walked slowly along, Arthur Bliss seriously reflected upon what had been said, though his wife revolved at the thought of doing what he had never done—consulting a woman. He had always regarded it as an honor due to the weaker sex when the stronger condescended to ask their advice, or make them a part in their deliberations. But to satisfy Abbott, and to assure himself of the inefficiency of the former's proposal, he resolved to do as he had been requested. No positive harm could result from the experiment, and he should then have the satisfaction of knowing that the truth of his theory was settled beyond a doubt.

He found his wife looking rather more thoughtful than usual, and drawing a chair near her, he seated himself and commenced.

"You spoke of a desire to give a party the other day, Eliza; I should be happy to gratify you in it, if you wish my power."

"Very likely," she laconically replied, without the least change of feature.

"I should indeed, and no one would be more pleased than myself to see new carpets upon the parlors as you mentioned," he continued.

"I haven't the least doubt of it," said Mrs. Bliss, in precisely the same tone, and without raising her eyes from her work.

"Just what I expected!" thought the husband. "She doesn't appreciate a single word I say."

"But you're on the old track, precisely," whispered something. "No wonder you don't succeed. Talk more to the point. Appeal to her better feelings."

"I don't believe she's got any," he mentally answered.

"Make the attempt," appealed the inward monitor.

"Eliza," he continued, more earnestly, after a pause, "do you candidly think that I would refuse you any reasonable request were it possible for me to grant it?"

"I don't know, I'm sure," she replied, despondently.

"What do you think?" he inquired, despondently.

"Why I think—I think that you would," replied Mrs. Bliss, hesitatingly, yet frankly, perceiving some satisfaction.

"Have I done so?" he asked, regarding her attentively.

"I had no fault to find when we were first married," was the evasive reply. "But why do you ask me such questions?" she added, evincing some astonishment.

"Because I think you have misconstrued my conduct. You probably think me a rich man, and you don't?"

Mrs. Bliss looked at her husband with genuine surprise, not unminged with curiosity, but made no reply.

"I perceive you think it a strange question, and perhaps will hardly credit my words when I assert them. But far from being so at the present time. Some months since I was a heavy loser by the failure of an extensive firm."

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"Very likely," she laconically replied, without the least change of feature.

[Written for The Flag of our Union.]

TO NOIA.

BY J. HUNT, JR.

Dear Nore, may the gods of fate
Of pleasure find thy future days;
May rosy health thy future days;
And sweet thy path with joy always—
Without the mould of grief to haunt
One hour before thy mortal slay.

As age, with care and weakness creep
Around thy fair and youthful form,
Ascending up life's rugged steep,
Keep then thy heart with virtue warm;
Dread the dark and cheerless thought,
That close, at death, will sink to naught.

Be firm in faith, and truth will bear
Thy pure and ardent spirit o'er
That ocean, silent valley, where
The wicked fall to trouble more;
And where the shades of cold dismay
Are lost in heaven's unclouded ray.

There is a world above life's thrall,
Which only angels' feet have trod—
A home of love reserved for all
The chosen people, blest of God;
Nor sin, nor gloom, nor mortal woes,
Disturb the sacred peace of those.

When thou thy world of love shalt gain,
And all thy hopes from doubt are free,
That promised portion will be paid,
Will yield time rest, unceasingly;
O, in that clime may we appear,
The child and parent, there as here.

[Written for The Flag of our Union.]

THE ARTIST'S APPRENTICE.

BY MORRIS ALGER, JR.

BUREL, a Flemish artist, was one day busily engaged in his studio, when his attention was drawn to a timid knock at the door.

"Come in," said he, hastily.

The door opened slowly, and when at length the artist found time to look up, he saw standing before him a rough, uncouth lad, dressed poorly, and apparently quite embarrassed—since he was swinging his coarse straw hat in one hand, while the other contained a thin packet, enveloped in paper.

"Well," said Burel, in some surprise, "what would you like with me? What is the business which calls you here?"

The boy stammered with his hat.

"What is your name?" continued Burel.

"Hans."

"Well, have you no other? There are many of that name."

"Sach. My name is Hans Sach."

"Well, master Hans Sach, since that is your name, I would thank you to declare your business without further ado, since I am busy."

"I want to be an artist," said the boy, very abruptly.

"Ah, that is it. But what proof have I that you have the requisite talent? It is not every one that can become an artist."

"I know that, sir; but I believe I have some taste for it. I will show you what I have done already."

With these words he took a knife from his pocket, quickly cut the string which confined the package which he carried, disclosing several little designs which he had executed. These he put into the hands of Burel.

The latter took them carelessly, and cast an eye over them, but his attention was speedily riveted. Judge of his surprise when he beheld in these little sketches, clearly untaught, and the fruit of nature alone, evidences of the most surprising talent.

Burel at once saw that it would be for his advantage to secure this genius in a rougher exterior for a pupil. He was a shrewd, politic man, however, and was far from displaying the admiration with which these sketches had inspired him.

The boy looked at him with a gaze of eager inquiry, as if to learn what opinion he had formed.

"Hans," said he, "they are well enough. I think in time and with hard study you might become a respectable artist. You wish to learn the art; is it so?"

"Yes, sir," said Hans.

"And would like to become my pupil?"

"If you would be kind enough to take me."

"It is usual to give a fee on entering upon the study. Are you in a condition to do it?"

The boy's countenance fell.

"Alas! sir," he replied, "my parents died recently, leaving me only their blessing with which to make my way through the world. I had hoped to become an artist; but I have not a florin. I must even become a ploughboy, as they would have me."

He turned to go out.

"Stay," said Burel, "you are in too great haste. You are unable to give a fee, but I have not said I would not take you without one."

Hans's face lighted up once more.

"If you are willing to work hard, and fare plainly, I will take you. Shall it be so?"

"Most gratefully, sir, I will accept your offer."

Hans was immediately installed in the establishment of the artist as apprentice. He was not the only one. Here were some half-dozen studying under the same master. They were all of them sons of rich men, but none of them had any considerable taste for the art of which he had become a student. Being able, however, to pay the entrance fee, Burel, who was exceedingly fond of money, had received them without the least objection, and was wont to give most flattering accounts of their progress to their friends whenever inquiries were made. He spent but little time with them, applying them with a few of the fundamental rules of the art, and then leaving them to make acquisition of them as best they might.

Being indolent, and having, as I have already said, little taste for the art, this contented the pupils, who disposed of the time which rested upon their hands as seemed most agreeable to them. Burel, however, did not introduce Hans into the company of his older apprentices. It

did not suit his purposes that he should employ his time in the same idle manner.

At the top of the house there was a small attic, sufficiently rough looking, without plastering and unpainted. Into this apartment Hans was introduced.

"This," said Burel, "will be your apartment. Upon the floor is a bed on which you will rest at night. Here, by the window, is a table on which you can work."

"And what shall I do? What shall be my first lesson?"

"I shall not give you a regular lesson. You may execute any designs you think of similar to those which you showed me yesterday. Work industriously, and you will yet become an artist."

Hans found it a little difficult to conceive in what manner he was to become an artist without instruction, and began to think that he might have made as rapid progress anywhere else as in his present situation. But of course his master knew best, and so he toiled away late and late with unceasing ardor.

Three times a day a pitcher of water, and food of the plainest sort, would be brought to him. It was a confined life that he led, for Burel never invited him to leave his attic, except on Sundays, when he would be permitted to wander through the fields.

Meanwhile Hans accomplished a large amount of work. He threw off the sketches for which Burel had stipulated, with an inconceivable rapidity. These, when completed, were taken away by Burel, but whether Hans knew not. In reality, they were sold at good prices to admiring purchasers, who supposed they were the work of Burel himself. The uncouth apprentice was proving a source of considerable revenue to the artist.

Meanwhile his older apprentices were filled with the greatest curiosity to know who could be whom their instructor so carefully kept apart from the rest of them. They seized an opportunity when Burel was away to satisfy themselves on this point.

Creeping up stairs they called on Hans to open the door. Entering, they beheld with surprise the mean quarters in which their fellow-apprentice was confined. But their surprise was still greater when they cast their eyes over a sketch which he had just completed.

"Is this by Burel, left for you to copy?" they inquired, scarcely believing their eyes. "In good faith, he has improved of late."

"That is my own," said Hans.

"Your own! And do you execute many such?"

"Yes, that's all I do. I am at work upon them all the time."

They looked at each other in surprise.

"Certainly, you possess no ordinary talent," said they—for they knew sufficient of art to appreciate excellence.

"Do you think so?" asked Hans, overjoyed.

"Think so?—there can be no doubt of it. But what becomes of these sketches after you have completed them?"

"I don't know. M. Burel comes and takes them away, and I see no more of them."

"I'll warrant it, the miserly old curmudgeon. He sells them, no doubt, for a good round sum, which he cooly puts into his own pocket, and all while that he is making money out of you, he starves you on each far as this."

The speaker lifted contemptuously a plate of hard bread that lay on the table whereon Hans was working.

"I'll tell you what," he continued, "it's no more than fair that you should have at least some of the fruits of your own labors. I will engage you to paint for me designs emblematic of the four seasons, and I will give you francs apiece. If they are equal to this sketch, they will be well worth it. Don't have any scruples about diverting your time from Burel's employment. He may have enough out of you already. You can now work a little for yourself."

It will be believed that Hans readily acceded to this proposition which was so much to his advantage.

As he devoted but two hours a day to his own purposes, he accomplished sufficient for his master in the remaining part of the day to prevent any suspicion on his part; and when this commission was completed, it was followed by another on the part of his fellow students, who wished the month designed. This, also, was done to the complete satisfaction of the one who ordered it, and was immediately succeeded by something further from still another, till each of his fellow apprentices had given him a task to accomplish. As they were well paid for, Hans had accumulated what appeared to him quite a large sum of money. By this time, his fellow pupils having no more employment to offer him, advised him to run away from M. Burel's service.

"It is clear," said they, "that all the instruction you get is not from him, but due only to your own exertions. No longer stay to be imposed upon. Elsewhere you will get paid for the whole of your labors, and will not be compelled to work with a view to nothing for a recompense, for his advantage."

Hans saw that this advice was good, and did not hesitate to follow it. Rising the early morning, he collected what sketches he had executed, and stole forth as silently as possible, leaving, however, the following note for M. Burel:

"M. BUREL.—If you had acted fairly by me, I should not now leave your house. I find, however, that you have used me solely with a view to your own profit, without any regard to my advantage. I have become tired of serving as a source of revenue in which I, myself, have no participation."

When M. Burel discovered this note, and the disappearance of Hans, his anger and disappointment were unbounded. But he had no legal claims upon the services of the latter, as he well knew, and therefore thought it best to say as little as possible about it. Meanwhile, Hans

walked leisurely through the city, of which, during his stay with M. Burel, he had seen but little, gazing at the principal objects of curiosity.

His attention was directed towards a shop wherein objects of art were displayed in tempting array. He stopped to examine them more closely, and after a slight pause went in. A gentleman, well-dressed and of prepossessing appearance, was bargaining for an article which, on a casual glance, Hans was surprised to find was one of his own designs.

"My dear sir," said the shopkeeper, "you will find fifty francs not dear for so charming a design. It is, you perceive, by Burel, who of late has culled the most successful artists with distinguished success. Shall I put it up for you?"

"If you please."

"You are fortunate to obtain it. It is the last I have. The fact is, these designs of Burel command a ready sale, being universally admired, so that I am rarely able to keep one in my shop for more than twenty-four hours."

Four or five times as many popular his sketches had become, and his indignation was in the same measure heightened against his master, who had diverted to his own purposes, both the reputation and the profit of his labors. He was resolved to unmask him. Stepping forward, he said compassively to the purchaser:

"That sketch is not by Burel."

"It is not by Burel," said the shopkeeper, indignantly, scanning the rather rough-looking appearance of Hans. "Not by Burel! Perhaps, then," he continued, in an ironical manner, "monseigneur will deign to inform us whose it is."

"Mine," said Hans, with composure.

"Yours!" The shopkeeper laughed scornfully. "And you expect us to believe this? Where is your proof?"

"Here," said Hans, and at the same time he unfolded the package in his hand, and displayed three more sketches.

The shopkeeper examined them with surprise.

"Certainly," said he, "these are in the same style; but what assurance have I that they are yours, and how does it happen that the others have the name of Burel?"

"I was a pupil of his; and instead of instructing me, he kept me to work upon these sketches, which he sold for his own advantage. That they are mine I will satisfy you."

Seating himself at a table, Hans quickly improvised a sketch which, though not so finished as the others, displayed the same artistic talent. There was now no room for doubt. The shopkeeper purchased at a good price Hans's remaining sketches. The gentleman who had before bargained with him, invited him to dine with him, and, being of good wealth, took care that he should receive the consideration due to his talent. Hans studied faithfully the principles of the art in which as yet he was but imperfectly grounded, and became in time one of the most eminent of Flemish artists. His old instructor, Burel, learned to look up with reverence to the uncouth, awkward boy who years before had made himself known to him as Hans Sach, and he could not sufficiently regret the ill-advised love of money which had lost him the boast of having trained up the first artist in the kingdom.

AN INCIDENT.

A few weeks since, a Prussian family, consisting of a father, mother and three children, arrived in this city and took the cars for the West.

On the way, when a short distance from the city, one of the children, a little girl of four years of age, was carelessly allowed to go upon the platform, when she fell between the cars and had her arm mangled.

The family returned to the city with the child upon the platform, and the superintendent of the road, whose heart overflowed with benevolence, had the little sufferer taken to the hospital and properly provided for. The father was anxious to proceed on his journey, and after consultation it was determined to leave the child in charge of an older sister. The father, when ready to leave, called upon the superintendent and asked for compensation for the accident; and although he had no claim, either in law or equity, against the road, a handsome sum was given him, with which he seemed well satisfied.

The superintendent promised to look after his little girl, and to forward her to her father as she recovered. On taking his leave, the father generously presented the older girl to the superintendent, saying that she was a good girl and a smart one each for her years.

The superintendent is somewhat embarrassed with his new acquisition, though she is really a smart and tidy-looking girl, and to work if a hard worker, but she thinks his situation is not quite so bad as that of the man who drew an elephant in the lottery.—*Boston Journal.*

EXPLAINING SCRIPTURE.

We have heard ministers and religious dignitaries explain Scripture, for doctrinal purposes, after a sort well compared with the following rich specimen.

Melting Hearts—A friend of ours, says the New York Journal, who has recently returned from a little jaunt in the country, happening to stay at the lodge of an old time deacon, has handed us the following specimen of that pious gentleman's commentary on a passage in the Bible.

"As it is quite odd to anything we have seen lately, we do not feel disposed to keep it entirely to ourselves."

It appears that for many years past, the deacon had observed the custom of reading daily chapters from the sacred Scriptures to the family, and of making a running, extemporaneous commentary upon each particular passage that seemed to require elucidation. Coming to that part of the Bible which says: "Now these seven did Mithel bear unto Nahor," he cleared his throat and explained it thus:

"The object of this here passage is to show how unfortunate the people used to be in old times. Then they didn't have no dairies, but was obliged to milk bears, and it took six to hold the bear while 'other milked it, and they had to go to Nahor to get the bears."

KANSAAS.

The Parkville (Mo.) Industrial Luminary, speaking of the new territory of Kansas, says it is difficult to appreciate fully the importance of this territory to the people of the West.

It is a land of rolling prairies, covered with nutritious grasses; the magnificence of its scenery is rich and varied; its resources for manufacturing purposes; and the graceful alteration of hill and dale, shade grove and extended plain. But all these things are of little value, but the influence of this region when it shall be filled with the happy homes of intelligent, industrious, enterprising American citizens.

[Written for The Flag of our Union.]

MY SISTER ANN AND I.

BY H. W. FAIRBORN.

I remember, I remember,
Though a long time it must be,
The ragged, old time schoolroom,
Where I learned to read, A, B, C,
Where, sitting at my desk, I found
We went, my sister Ann and I.

A creek ran dashing o'er the rocks
Just by our schoolroom door;
Tall willows leaned along the banks,
To listen to the roar.
Unheeding how the hours would fly,
Oft there stood sister Ann and I.

If you please,
You are fortunate to obtain it. It is the last I have. The fact is, these designs of Burel command a ready sale, being universally admired, so that I am rarely able to keep one in my shop for more than twenty-four hours."

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